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TAGS: OVIP CLINTON HILLARY PREL SG MR

SUBJECT: (U) Secretary Clinton's June 11, 2009 meeting
with Senegalese Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio

¶1. Classified by AF Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson.
Reasons: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶2. (U) Thursday, June 11, 2009; 3:15 p.m; Washington DC

¶3. (U) Participants:

U.S.
The Secretary
AF A/S Johnnie Carson
PA A/S Ian Kelly
-Jacob Sullivan, Secretary's Office
Andrew Silski (AF/W notetaker)

Senegal
Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio
Ambassador Amadou Lamine Ba

¶4. (U) SUMMARY. The Secretary's first meeting with the Senegalese Foreign Minister focused on African regional security issues, notably the Minister's constructive role in mediating efforts to restore constitutional order and democracy in Mauritania. They also discussed strengthening democracy, good governance, press freedoms, and fiscal responsibility in the run-up to Senegal's anticipated signing of a compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) this autumn.
END SUMMARY.

BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

¶5. (SBU) The Secretary expressed appreciation to FM Gadio for his influential and strong leadership on the continent, and his eloquent advocacy for peace, security, democracy, and the rule of law. A/S Carson commented that Senegal was our most reliable, strongest Francophone ally in Africa and a true friend of the United States. Offering his personal admiration for the Secretary, the Minister agreed that Senegal was a good friend of the United States. Gadio said that terrorism affected Africa directly as much as it did the United States and noted that President Wade had organized an anti-terrorism conference in Dakar promptly after September 11. Gadio said that Senegal was "available" to the Obama Administration?especially since many Senegalese almost believe that they themselves elected him, he quipped.

MAURITANIA

¶6. (C) In an aside with A/S Carson before the meeting, Gadio noted that hardliners encouraging President Abdallahi to take a tough stance so that the June 13 deadline for establishing a transitional government will pass and provide a rationale for delaying the July 18 polls. As he was leaving Washington immediately for a resumption of talks, Gadio encouraged the USG to stress

to Aziz and Abdallahi the importance of the compromise agreement that had been negotiated. Gadio said nobody or nothing could take away what Abdallahi already had achieved as the duly elected president. A/S Carson agreed.

In his meeting with the Secretary, FM Gadio stressed the importance of the stabilization of Mauritania to Senegal and to the international community. Al Qaeda is "knocking on the door" there, and it was urgent to stabilize the country. "We must push the Mauritanian parties so the transition is done properly and so that the Mauritanian people can reclaim their own destiny and rule their own country." He asked for USG support of GoS efforts keep up pressure and momentum. The Secretary offered whatever assistance it takes to help the GoS "nail it down."

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

¶7. (C) The Secretary underscored the criticality of freedom of speech and of the press to strengthening the U.S.-Senegal bilateral relationship. She encouraged President Wade to follow up on his promise to decriminalize media offenses, and wondered if domestic concern over such issues might have contributed to the opposition's substantial gains in the March 22 local elections. FM Gadio agreed that the ruling party would be well served to learn those lessons, but opined that President Wade had done a lot for the media. Senegal had thousands of newspapers and was a country of freedom. FM Gadio assured her that because the bilateral relationship was open, frank, and focused on strengthening institutions without neocolonial overtones, "you can count on us" in being more vigilant about protecting those freedoms.

MCC

¶8. (C) The Secretary welcomed Senegal's upcoming IMF negotiations for an updated Policy Support Instrument and its prospects for signing a MCC compact this autumn, encouraging the GoS to make progress in unfulfilled indicators. She agreed that although the GoS had taken 4-5 years in working on the Compact, that extra effort had the potential in principle to enable the GoS to disburse funds more quickly than those states who had only 1-2 years of preparation. The Minister said the focus of the "\$400-450 million" draft Compact was on transportation in the rural north and Casamance (south). He had lobbied for a \$500 million Compact to ensure that none of the draft programs would be cut, and said that if such a Compact were signed, international development banks would follow suit in investing in the country.

VISITS

¶9. (SBU) The Minister remarked that President Wade, who serves as chair this year for the Organization of the Islamic Conference, plans to visit New York in early July at the NAACP's invitation. He understood POTUS might also attend the event and solicited a meeting between the two leaders on the margins of that event. FM Gadio also encouraged the Secretary and A/S Carson to pay a visit to Dakar at an early opportunity.

CLINTON